



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: GOOSE

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW NAME FOR THE GOOSE?

- Actually, the goose is not mentioned by name in the Bible.
- In one place in that section of the Bible called the Writings, *Ketuvim* in Hebrew, we read about *barburim avusim* בָּרְבָּרִים אֲבָסִים, which means “fatted fowl.”
- These included domestic geese that were fattened up for King Solomon’s dinner table.
- But the real Hebrew name for the goose is *avaz* (אֲוָז).

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT GEESE?

- They beautiful to watch when flying in formation.
- They have water-repellant feathers that make great pillow stuffing and insulation for parkas and sleeping bags.
- Their meat is delicious to eat.

WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT GEESE?

- They hiss and bite when angry or defending themselves.
- Although maybe that’s a good thing, because the rabbis said they make enough noise to be as good as a dog for guard duty. (*Ketubot* 27a)

WHAT HAS THE GOOSE GOT TO DO WITH PASSOVER?

- On the evening *before* the night of the first Passover seder (i.e., the 13th of the month of Nisan, or the 12th if the 13th should be on a Friday), we have a tradition to search for leaven in our homes—it’s called *bedikat chametz*.
- Who can teach us what leaven is? (*Chametz* is leavened bread, the new dough to which the leavening agent [called *se'or*] has been added, and it is called *lechem chametz*, i.e., “leavened bread” [Lev. 7: 13].)
- Can anyone teach us why we get rid of all the leaven and avoid eating anything with leaven during the week of Passover? (*Chametz* represents our desire to do the wrong thing, to forget what Torah teaches us. So when we search out the *chametz* in our home before Passover, we’re also searching within ourselves to get rid of anything that keeps us from doing what God wants us to do.)
- The idea is to make sure that not even the smallest bit of *chametz* remains in the house during Passover.

- So during Passover we're only to eat matzah, no regular bread.
- By the light of a wax candle, with a wooden spoon and a whisk made of goose feathers tied together, every corner in the house is searched for stray crumbs.

IT'S TIME FOR THE GOOSE QUIZ?

- What two other birds are geese closely related to: (Duck and swan.)
- How many different kinds of wild geese live in the world? (About 40.)
- How long does it take for goose eggs to hatch? (From 28 to 32 days.)
- When do young geese begin to swim and fly? (Begin to swim a few days after birth; begin to fly at about two months.)
- How long does a domestic goose live? (Up to 30 years.)
- How far can a goose fly without stopping to rest? (More than 1000 miles.)

ONE OF OUR OLDEST MYSTICAL BOOKS, CALLED THE CHAPTER OF SONG (Perek Shira), TEACHES US ABOUT HOW THE ANIMALS PRAISE GOD.

- The domestic goose says: "Praise Adonai; call on God's name. Proclaim God's deeds among all the nations. Sing praises to God and speak of all God's wondrous acts." (Psalm 105:1-2)
- What do you think the domestic goose is teaching us?
- The goose that lives in the desert, when he sees Israel studying Torah, says: "Make way in the desert a road for God. Make a highway in the wilderness for our God." (Isaiah 40:3)
- What do you think the wild goose is teaching us?

THERE'S A SAYING IN THE TALMUD, LIKE A PROVERB, ABOUT THE GOOSE:

- "The goose stoops [i.e., bends over to watch the ground] as it goes along, but its eyes see far away." (Megilah 14b)
- What do you think that means to teach us? (Maybe it means that by watching for the little things that make us stumble in our day-to-day life, we may avoid far bigger problems in the future.)



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